

A MOVEMENT, MAPS, AND THE MIDLANDS: WOMEN ESPERANTISTS IN 1911

SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND

BY CLAIRE TAYLOR



Agnes Burton Deans

202 Bruntsfield Place, Edinburgh
Attended Antwerp 1911, Krakow 1912



Annie Munro

39 London St, Edinburgh
Attended Dresden 1908, Barcelona 1909,
Antwerp 1911, Krakow 1912



Jane Baird

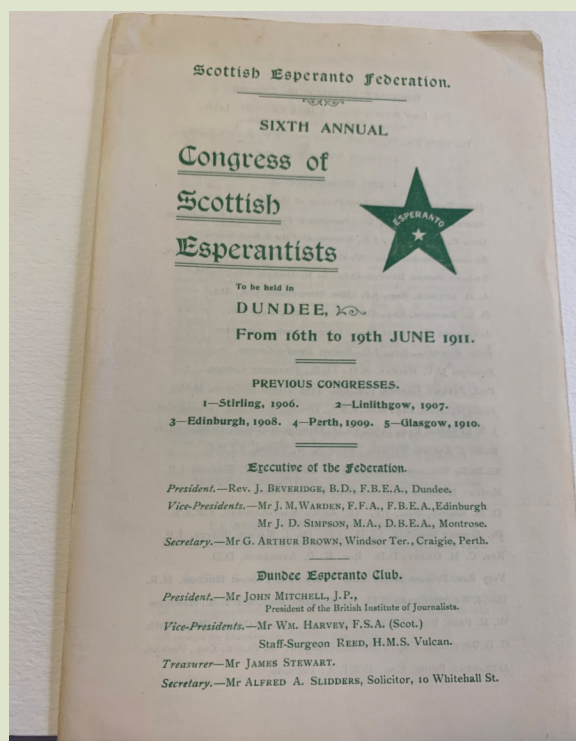
95 Bellevue Road, Edinburgh
Attended Antwerp 1911, Krakow 1912, Bern 1913 (1)

BACKGROUND

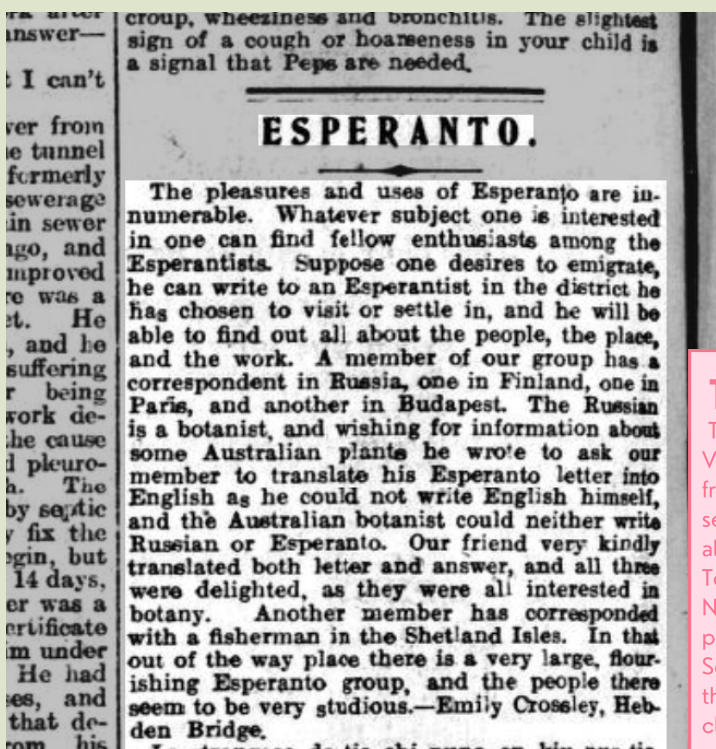
Attendance records of the Seventh International Esperanto Congress held in Antwerp in 1911 demonstrate that 106 attendees traveled from Scotland. **Sixty-five of them were women**, and fifty-three of these women lived in Edinburgh. The three women seen above were part of this group. This number of Scots and percentage of Scottish women was unmatched in all other International Esperanto Congresses before World War I. My research asked:

Who were these dressmakers, nurses, journalists, typewriters, and scientists who spoke Esperanto, a planned language invented by the Polish doctor Ludwik Zamenhof in 1887, in Scotland and the Midlands?

Why did such women travel internationally to Antwerp and other congresses to discuss art, theater, literature, current affairs, and the potential of this universal language with fellow Esperantists from around the world?



My **research method** included going through materials in the John Beveridge Collection held by Special Collections of the University of St Andrews Library. During my reading room session, I got to hold and flip through the programs and invitations like that which is seen above for various Esperanto congresses and events. Held in Dundee in the same year as the International Antwerp Congress, many of the women listed in the program for the Sixth Annual Scottish Congress were listed in the Antwerp attendance records.



THE MIDLANDS

The Hebden Bridge Historical Society helped me find information on Violet and Emily Crossley and Helen Geddes who were mentioned frequently in The British Esperantist under the Hebden Bridge, England section. Emily Crossley was a machinist worker at Fustian Goods (2), but also an Esperanto correspondent for her local newspaper entitled Todmorden and District News. This excerpt on the left is from the 17 November 1911 edition of the paper (3). Additionally, Violet Crossley presented the Esperanto section report to the Hebden Bridge Literary and Scientific Society in 1911. The Crossleys consequently demonstrate one of the many cases in my research of women's vital roles in local Esperanto clubs as they represented local Esperantists and their values to wider communities.

REFERENCES

- 1.) The three photos of the women are from p. 64 and 68 in 1912 Krakow Congress *"Albumo,"* digitized by the Austrian National Library.
- 2.) Enumerator Sheet from the 1911 England Census - provided by the Hebden Bridge Historical Society.
- 3.) Digitized newspaper found on the British Newspaper Archive online collection.
- 4.) Rebecca Madgin and Richard Rodger, "Inspiring Capital?" *Urban History*, 40 no. 3 (August 2013), 510.

MAPPING: BRUNTSFIELD LINKS CLUSTER

A large part of my research was mapping the addresses of the Antwerp Congress attendees who lived in Edinburgh using QGIS software. The male attendees on the map above of the Bruntsfield Links cluster are signified by a blue dot, the female attendees by a pink dot. On the Antwerp attendance sheets, Page was listed as a solicitor, Heron as a lawyer, Dishart as a stenographer, and Mackenzie as a journalist. When examined next to the map where large estates are present throughout this area, these professions characterize Bruntsfield Links as having a wealthy, upper-middle-class population. Still, while the majority of both employed women and men were concentrated in Scotland's capital, a gender comparison of professions reveals that there was a wider socioeconomic range of women than men who attended the Antwerp Congress. The values of Esperanto clubs and the city of Edinburgh (4) also overlapped with an appreciation for literary and artistic works which may explain the high volume of Edinburgh Esperantists.

CONCLUSION

My research began to uncover women's involvement in the Esperanto movement in Britain, an area of **gender history** and **transnational history** unwritten until now.

By examining the professional and personal lives of women Esperantists through census documents, local newspapers, archival material, attendance records, and Esperanto journals, my research proved that women were not just members of local Esperanto groups in Scotland and the Midlands. They held **leadership** positions, were responsible for the **teaching** and **outreach** of the language, and regularly performed live **entertainment** at socials. Still, Esperanto was not the center of these women's lives. Their fascinating careers, passions, and interests outside of Esperanto counterintuitively demonstrate the appeal of Esperanto as a movement and hobby in the early twentieth century.

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